



The Virginia Saltwater Review

Plans and Statistics Department
2600 Washington Avenue, 3rd Floor
Newport News, VA 23607-0756
<http://www.mrc.virginia.gov>

Vol. 23, No. 8
June 19, 2009

by

Department of Plans and Statistics, Fisheries Management Division

OVERVIEW

Offshore action has really picked up this week near the Norfolk Canyon. Numerous yellowfin tuna and dolphin were reported. Mako sharks and bluefin tuna were also reported from the Lumpy Bottom. Inshore in several locations the large flounder, while scattered, have begun to bite. Large fish were reported from Chincoteague, Wachapreague, and the lower bay areas. Spanish mackerel and puppy drum (juvenile red drum) are showing at the piers, and the usual summertime fish—croaker, spot, and sea mullet—were reported throughout the area. Some nice cobia catches were reported last week, and the cobia action seems to be heating up as sight casters were able to find nice fish last week.

Speaking of cobia, don't forget this weekend's Hampton Creek Cobia Tournament in downtown Hampton (<http://www.hamptoncreekcobiatournament.com/>) which benefits the Children's Hospital of the King's Daughters. The VMRC Biological Sampling Team will be on hand to gather the biological data from every fish turned into the tournament and provide length, weight, sex and age data on the fish back to our readers later this summer.

THE FISHING REPORT

Chincoteague

According to staff at Captain Bob's, large flounder are being caught around Chincoteague. Numerous big catches in the 21- to 23-inch range were caught last week from the Queen's Sound and Assateague Channel. Gulp bait and minnows seem to be catching them the best. Offshore, the Lumpy Bottom and the Parking Lot were producing with two 100-pound mako sharks reported from the Parking Lot and a 150-pound bluefin tuna brought in from the Lumpy Bottom.

Wachapreague

Hot offshore action was reported from Wachapreague Marina this week. The Norfolk Canyon has been

producing small yellowfin tuna, and east of the Lumpy Bottom, anglers are finding mako and tiger sharks. Inshore, there are large numbers of flounder in the Wachapreague Inlet, but only a few have been keeper-sized.

At Captain Zed's, the catch of the week was a 22-inch, 5.5 -pound flounder, which was the winner in a recent flounder tournament. Croakers are biting in the Wachapreague Inlet and at Green and Drawing Channels. Bay markers 6 and 7 have also been productive. Trout were caught in Newstone Creek and south of the Coast Guard Station, and a few catch-and-release striped bass were reported at Dawson Shoals.

Cape Charles

Staff at Chris' Bait and Tackle report cobia up to 70 pounds at Latimer Shoals. While flounder fishing has been scattered, some nice fish have been caught. Small croaker and sand mullet were found near Kiptopeke, and a few spadefish were found around the Cell.

Lower Bay/Bridge Tunnel

At Cobb's Marina, staff report a citation flounder (7 pounds, 2 ounces, 26 inches) caught trolling with squid at the second island of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel. Cobia were spotted this week at the second and third islands, and spadefish are still at the Chesapeake Light Tower.

According to staff at the Sunset Boating Center, striped bass and flounder were caught at the structure of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel last week.

Salt Ponds Marina reports that legal-sized flounder have been biting in the area. While there were no citation fish brought in last week, there were several that were very close.

Several citations were reported at the York River Fishing Center last week. Two citation fish were reported from the Squash Channel: a 58-pound, 6-ounce, 57-inch cobia and a 51-inch catch-and-release red drum. Flounder were biting in the area, and a 7-pound, 10- ounce flounder was brought in from the Baltimore Channel measuring 27 inches long. Other fishing action included flounder, croaker, and spot catches from the Gloucester Point Pier.

Ken Neill, reporting secretary for the Peninsula Anglers Club, contributed the following:

Virginia is experiencing its best yellowfin tuna bite in years. Boats are coming back with limits of tuna ranging from barely legal to pushing 70 pounds. Nobody knows how long this bite will last, but it is on now. This action has been best in the vicinity of the Norfolk Canyon along the 100-Fathom Curve. Gaffer dolphin are also in the catch along with an occasional wahoo or a blue marlin adding to the action. Closer to shore, some bluefin tuna have been caught by anglers fishing the 20-Fathom Curve and some of the inshore hills. Both small bluefin and those in the 150-pound class are around. Plenty of bluefish are also on the inshore hills. King mackerel are another possible catch while trolling for bluefin on the Hot Dog or 26-Mile Hill. Spadefish continue to be caught at the Chesapeake Light Tower and the bite on structures in the bay is picking up. A spadefish pushing 15

pounds was caught at the Cell this week. Cobia continue to be the most sought after fish in the bay. Catches have been mixed for both chummers and sight casters. Both techniques are producing good catches and skunks, which is typical cobia fishing. Cape Henry is the hot area for Spanish mackerel, though they are being encountered all along the oceanfront and in the lower bay. Big red drum continue to be caught around the northern end of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel. The Buoy 10 area remains a hot spot. Plenty of flounder are being caught, though most are throw-backs. The best catches are coming from the Cell area and from anglers live-baiting the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel.

Dr. Julie Ball, IGFA International Representative for Virginia Beach, contributed the following:

Summer officially starts this week, and the summer fishing trend should continue as soon as the wind subsides this weekend. Most anglers will resume their chase for the latest big attraction—cobia. Although the bite off Hampton has slowed up, fish are still coming from the Eastern Shore side of the bay, where chummers sitting on Latimer Shoal and the Inner Middle Grounds are having luck. Sight casters continue to pick fish off the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel proper on calmer days.

Flounder action is off and on, depending on who you ask. Although anglers are still working hard for their limits, plenty of “barely shorts” are keeping them interested. According to Connie at Long Bay Pointe Bait and Tackle, a few doormats are coming from the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel area, where anglers are having good luck with live bait and jigging. Robert Hodge of Richmond landed a nice flatfish weighing in at 10 pounds, 4 ounces on a live spot while fishing with Captain Craig Paige aboard the PAIGE 2 recently. Fish are also coming from the Cell, Buoy 42, Back River Reef, and Oyster, as well as Lynnhaven and Rudee inlets. One angler fishing from the jetties scored with a 7-pound, 11-ounce doormat inside Rudee this week.

Spadefish are still commanding considerable attention from anglers, with the Chesapeake Light Tower still the favorite location. Reports indicate there were over 60 boats anchored at the Tower last weekend. Larger fish have moved in, with the biggest coming from the upper bay hot spots, such as the Cell and Wolf Trap Light. Roland E. Murphy of Richmond was fishing at the Cell aboard the KINGFISH when a massive 14-pound, 14-ounce spadefish took him for several laps around the boat. At weigh-in, it was determined that this amazing catch may secure the new IGFA All Tackle World Record, as well as the new Virginia State record for this species.

Black drum all but deserted the shoals, and are now starting to show around the islands of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel, with scattered hook-ups reported. These fish require extra time while reviving them in order to increase their survival rate. Big red drum are still taking baits along the Eastern Shore shoals and near Buoy 10, especially at night on an incoming tide.

The Spanish mackerel bite along the Virginia Beach ocean front is heating up, although most fish are on the smallish size. Small spoons trolled at 5 to 6 knots are enticing the best response. It’s only a matter of time until reports of the first catches of king mackerel start rolling in from near the Little Island Fishing Pier.

Although tricky, some anglers are finding some luck with sheepshead. Many anglers are reporting

sightings of pods of large sheepshead cruising the surface behind cobia. Triggerfish are making another good showing this year, with plenty of fish already entertaining anglers near the four islands of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel.

Larger croaker pushing 2 to 2.5 pounds are lurking around the James River Bridge, the Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel, the Monitor-Merrimac Bridge Tunnel, and off Ocean View. Surf anglers are finding a mixed bag along the ocean front, with loads of sea mullet pushing to nearly a pound and scattered puppy drum (juvenile red drum) providing most of the commotion.

When deep droppers can get out, they are still going strong with good limits of tilefish, grouper, and rosefish. The Rudee Inlet headboats running out of the Fishing Center are finding decent black sea bass action at the Triangle Wrecks lately.

The offshore scene is boiling with yellowfin tuna. Boats are hooking dozens of tuna, with many too small to keep. Several fish are falling into the 20- to 40-pound class, with some nice dolphin also in the mix. The best action is coming from north of the Triple O's in 100 to 500 fathoms of water. A bigeye stole the limelight this past week when it tipped the scales at 180 pounds at Fisherman's Wharf Marina.

Virginia Middle Bay

The summer is almost here, and the usual suspects can be found. Roger, with Jett's Hardware reports that bluefish, striped bass, croaker, small spot, and flounder have all been biting around the jetties during the last week. Expect more of the same as the temperatures continue to climb; however, you will not be able to possess striped bass in Virginia as the spring season ended June 15.

Tommy, with Garrett's Marina, reports that large croaker up to two pounds are still being caught in the area. The downside is the rain which has been keeping the salinity down and keeping some species of fish from entering the area. If things start to dry out, the diversity should increase in that area.

Jerry Thrash, of Queen's Creek Outfitters, reported the following:

Waters continue to warm as bay surface temps near the Cell had reached 73 degrees on Monday. Good numbers of spadefish were caught at the Cell this weekend. Included in these was a new state record fish. Details on the fish should be available from J&W Seafood. The bite has just begun! Fresh clams fished in a slick of clam chum are producing the fish. Creeks and rivers are full of spot and croaker. Both species can also be caught from the beaches. It has been a slow week for speckled trout. Bigger flounder are arriving, but it is still tough fishing. A bite developed Monday afternoon at the turn of the tide but only lasted about an hour. A long strip of squid (6 to 10 inches) or long cut croaker strips with a minnow on the same hook are fish getters. July is always our top flounder month so let's hope the fish keep showing up.

Virginia Beach

According to staff at the Virginia Beach Fishing Center, numerous yellowfin tuna (ranging from 20 to 45 pounds) and dolphin (ranging from 10 to 40 pounds) were caught offshore this week. The areas near the Norfolk Canyon seem to be the most productive. Deep-dropping trips have done very well with grouper

and tilefish, and headboats had had success with croaker and black sea bass this week. Inshore, there was a mix of spadefish, bluefish, and Spanish mackerel reported. Cobia have just started to appear, and this week, there were reports of sight casters hooking cobia in the bay.

Virginia Piers

Anglers caught spot, sea mullet, croaker, bluefish, and blue crabs at the Lynnhaven Pier last week. Puppy drum (juvenile red drum) were also caught in the evenings.

Numerous Spanish mackerel were hooked at the Virginia Beach Fishing Pier. Small spot and sea mullet, and loads of puppy drum (juvenile red drum) were also caught. Pier visitors are also enjoying good catches of blue crabs.

At the Little Island Fishing Pier, staff report catches of spot, skate, and flounder last week.

At the Buckroe Fishing Pier, catches included nice keeper-flounder (including one 22-inch fish). Spanish mackerel have been numerous and croaker and spot continue to bite. Last week, puppy drum (juvenile red drum) had just begun to arrive.

Outer Banks, NC

Offshore fishing out of Oregon Inlet continues to be good with limits of dolphin being caught. Wahoo, king mackerel, tilefish, amberjack, yellowfin and blackfin tuna, and assorted snappers and groupers catches improved as well. More billfish are moving into the area by the day with the possibility of a slam—a blue marlin, a white marlin, and a sailfish being caught in a single day. Mid-range anglers saw their prospects improving with king mackerel for the trollers and black sea bass for the bottom droppers. The Spanish mackerel and bluefish bite slowed down this week for those working off the beaches. Pier fishermen saw several different species biting, but overall, things were on the slow side. Expect to see the typical summer denizens such as spot, croaker, and the occasional ray testing your drag. Inshore fishermen had to pick and choose where they fished to have any luck. Again, the typical species targeted were puppy drum (juvenile red drum) and speckled trout.

South of Oregon Inlet, the surf fishermen saw good fishing weather but few fish. Spanish mackerel were biting around Ramp 55 with a few bluefish mixed in with an occasional flounder and puppy drum as well. Sea mullet were being reported around ramps 49 and 43. Cobia were also caught in decent numbers.

Offshore fishing out of Cape Hatteras Inlet was dominated by gaffer-sized dolphin. Wahoo and tuna were around but not in any good densities. Inshore fishermen were having the best luck with speckled trout early in the mornings. Anglers chasing the flocks of gulls could find bluefish.

If you have additional information or would like further details contact Joe Grist at (757) 247-2237.

Please credit the Virginia Marine Resources Commission's THE SALTWATER REVIEW as the source of the fishing information.








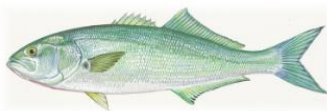
ATTENTION VIRGINIA SALTWATER ANGLERS!!!

THE VIRGINIA MARINE RESOURCES COMMISSION

***WANTS YOUR FISH....
TO MEASURE AND AGE.***

*You catch it, you fillet it,
but instead of throwing the remains in the trash,
please donate them to science.*

The Marine Sportfish Collection Project will focus on species of fish that are difficult to collect through the agency's normal sampling program. Anglers are asked to donate their filleted carcasses (head and tail intact) of legal and fresh-caught:

COBIA	SHEEPSHEAD	RED DRUM	BLACK DRUM
			
TAUTOG	KING MACKEREL	SPANISH MACKEREL	BLUEFISH (GREATER THAN 16 POUNDS OR 36 INCHES)
			

**In return for participating in the project, the agency will provide a
ONE FREE PROJECT TEE SHIRT or HAT, FOR EACH PARTICIPANT,
PER MONTH of the DONATION.**

Please visit these bait and tackle merchants to participate:

**Chris' Bait and Tackle (Capeville)
Long Bay Pointe Marina (Virginia Beach)
Wallace's Bait and Tackle (Hampton)
Buckroe Fishing Pier (Hampton)**



ATTENTION VIRGINIA SALTWATER ANGLERS!!!

Get Hooked!
Report at
www.vasaltwaterjournal.com

The Virginia Marine Resources Commission wants to know about the saltwater fish you caught and if you threw it back or took it home for dinner. How big was it? What species was it? Where did you catch it? This self-reported catch-and-release information will be posted on-line, giving the recreational angler a broader picture of what everyone else is catching -- and where.



The Fisherman's Journal is a tool intended to benefit the individual angler, the fishing community, and fishery managers. It allows individual anglers to keep an easy-to-retrieve record of their successful fishing experiences. It allows the fishing community to share and learn about other anglers' experiences. Finally, it benefits fishery managers by allowing them to assess fish populations by analyzing data provided by you, the recreational fisherman.

You will be able to report catch-and-release ranges, in addition to individual fish kept or released.

On those days that you catch-and-release 50 bluefish, you can just report the number caught and a range of lengths. Reporting individual measurements on more highly prized species -- such as Red Drum, Striped Bass and Flounder -- provides a greater benefit for everyone.

Anglers also may report their fishing trip information, including general location, time of day, weather and water conditions and type of gear and bait used. This information could be extremely valuable to other anglers to give them an idea of what is caught, where it is caught, and what bait is working on what species.

This self-reporting program will help anglers to become more successful and will provide fishery managers with important anecdotal information on recreational catches. The voluntary on-line reporting system is called the "Saltwater Fisherman's Journal," and is found at www.vasaltwaterjournal.com.

A screenshot of the Virginia Marine Resources Commission's "Recreational Fishing Online Reporting" website. The header includes the commission's name and logo. The main content area is titled "Recreational Saltwater Fishing" and includes a "Welcome Jgrist," message. There are two main sections: "Red Drum Reports are Needed!" which explains the need for length data for a stock assessment, and "New 2008 Tautog Regs" which lists the closed season (May 1 through June 24), minimum size limit (14 inches), and possession limit (4 per person). A sidebar on the left shows the "Virginia Recreational Assessment Program" logo and a summary for June 16, 2008: Members: 1,457, Trips: 295, Catches: 3,941. At the bottom, there are "Related Links" and a "Feedback" section.

Introducing the Virginia Fishing Line Recycling Program!

- Please help keep our waterways cleaner and safer for:
 - fish
 - birds
 - marine mammals
 - boaters and swimmers
- Deposit used or tangled monofilament fishing line into specially marked containers!



VMRC-Managed Locations!*

Ocean View Fishing Pier, Norfolk

Long Bay Pointe Marina, Virginia Beach

Buckroe Fishing Pier, Hampton

Chris' Bait and Tackle, Cape Charles

Capt. Bob's Marina, Chincoteague

***DGIF manages other locations throughout Virginia**

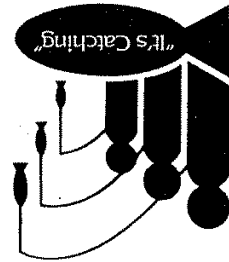
The Virginia Fishing Line Recycling Program is run jointly by the Virginia Marine Resources Commission and the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries with support from the Boat US Foundation.

If you have any questions about the program, or suggestions for new container locations, please contact Alicia Nelson at (757) 247-2244 or email alicia.nelson@mrc.virginia.gov.



FIRST CLASS MAIL

TAKE A FRIEND FISHING



FISHERIES PLANS/STATISTICS OFFICE
VIRGINIA MARINE RESOURCES COMMISSION
2600 WASHINGTON AVE., 3RD FLOOR
NEWPORT NEWS, VIRGINIA 23607

Practice

CAREFUL CATCH

REDUCE STRESS FACTORS THAT KILL FISH

Exhaustion * Loss of Slime * Wounds * Time out of Water